

Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03 NEA-10

NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 USIA-15 TRSE-00 MBFR-03

SAJ-01 SS-15 NSC-10 H-03 ACDA-19 OMB-01 IO-13 RSR-01

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R 231500Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 385

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USCINCEUR

USNMR SHAPE

S E C R E T ROME 8591

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, NATO, FR

SUBJECT: FRANCE AND EUROPEAN DEFENSE COOPERATION

1. IN WIDE-RANGING AUGUST 23 CONVERSATION ON VARIOUS EUROPEAN DEFENSE ISSUES, BRIG. GENERAL SANTINI (CHIEF OF NATO OFFICE IN MOD) TOLD EMBOFF THAT ITALIANS WERE BECOMING MORE AND MORE CONVINCED THAT FRENCH POLICY TOWARDS ENGAGING IN SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS ON BROAD MILITARY ISSUES CONFRONTING EUROPE WAS UNDERGOING A CHANGE. SANTINI SAID THAT HERETOFORE FRANCE HAD FLATLY REFUSED TO DISCUSS SUCH ISSUES IN BILATERAL MEETINGS WITH ITALIAN OFFICIALS, BUT, IN CONNECTION WITH UPCOMING BILATERAL MILITARY TALKS (SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER), THE FRENCH HAVE AGREED TO INCLUDE EUROPEAN-WIDE DEFENSE ISSUES ON THE AGENDA FOR THE FIRST TIME. SANTINI SURMISED THAT ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL ITEMS TO BE ADDRESSED WOULD BE THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN A MULTILATERAL EUROPEAN FORUM

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CONCERNED WITH THIS SUBJECT.

2. IN RESPONSE TO EMBOFF'S QUESTION AS TO THE CURRENT STATUS OF EARLIER REPORTS THAT THE ARMAMENTS COMMITTEE OF THE WEU MIGHT SERVE SUCH A PURPOSE, SANTINI RESPONDED THAT THE IDEA IS VERY MUCH ALIVE. HE REMARKED THAT THE PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE IS THE DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE OF THE BRUSSELS TREATY TOWARDS GERMANY. WAYS MUST BE FOUND, HE SAID, TO GET AROUND THE LANGUAGE OF THE TREATY CONCERNING THE POSSIBILITY OF RENEWED GERMAN AGGRESSION SO AS TO PERMIT FRG PARTICIPATION.

3. SANTINI ADMITTED THAT FRANCE'S MOTIVATION WAS STILL TO BE TESTED, I.E., TO WHAT DEGREE HAS THE ALLEGED RENEWED FRENCH INTEREST IN EUROPEAN DEFENSE COOPERATION BEEN ENGENDERED BY FEAR OF BEING ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE EUROGROUP'S ACTIVITY IN THE ARMS PROCUREMENT FIELD. BUT, SANTINI MAINTAINED, THE CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE OF GETTING THE FRENCH SUBSTANTIVELY INVOLVED WARRANTED EXHAUSTING ALL POSSIBILITIES WHICH OFFER THE HOPE OF ENTICING THE FRENCH INTO A MULTILATERAL DEFENSE FORUM. (COMMENT: AS HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN REPORTED, THE "CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE" REFERRED TO BY SANTINI REFLECTS THE DEEPLY FELT ITALIAN VIEW THAT THE EUROPEANS MUST START NOW DOWN THE ROAD TO EUROPEAN DEFENSE UNITY AND, WITHOUT FRANCE, THIS IS A CHIMERA. UNDERLYING ALL OF THIS, OF COURSE, IS THE BELIEF THAT THE PRESENCE OF U.S. FORCES IN EUROPE CANNOT BE COUNTED ON FOR THE INDEFINITE FUTURE. IN THEIR ABSENCE, THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE TO A EUROPE UNIFIED POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY AND MILITARILY IS, IN ITALIAN EYES, "FINLANDIZATION" FOR THOSE EUROPEAN STATES SUCH AS ITALY WHERE THERE ARE PRONOUNCED LEFTIST TENDENCIES IN THE BODY POLITIC.)

4. ULTIMATELY, SANTINI FORESAW THE ANGLO-FRENCH NUCLEAR FORCE AS CONSTITUTING AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF "EUROPEAN" DEFENSE CAPABILITY. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE SOVIET ATTITUDE TOWARDS GERMAN PARTICIPATION IN SUCH A FORCE WOULD REQUIRE THAT THE BRITISH AND THE FRENCH RETAIN THE "KEY" AND THAT IT WOULD BE SOME TIME BEFORE THE GERMANS WOULD COME AROUND TO ACCEPT FULLY SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT. BUT, HE REITERATED, THIS SEEMED AT THIS JUNCTURE THE ONLY WAY TO GO AND HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE U.S. WOULD EVENTUALLY SUPPORT NOT ONLY THE ABSTRACT CONCEPT OF EUROPEAN DEFENSE UNITY BUT ALSO THE CREATION OF AN INTEGRATED

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ANGLO-FRENCH NUCLEAR FORCE. VOLPE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: hilburpw
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973ROME08591
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS VOLPE
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730820/aaaaaogk.tel
Line Count: 108
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: hilburpw
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14-Sep-2001 by rowellE0>; APPROVED <19-Sep-2001 by hilburpw>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRANCE AND EUROPEAN DEFENSE COOPERATION
TAGS: MARR, FR, NATO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005